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Blessed by Union
Gospel Mission

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PLUS:
Ronnie McBrayer
is Seeing Stars

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AMERICAN RIVER
MESSENGER

Volume 8 • Issue 13

Serving Fair Oaks, Gold River, Rancho Cordova & Sacramento County

First Edition for July 2013

Fair Oaks
Community Update
with Susan Peters



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Celebrating
the 4th
with
Fireworks!



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Flag Mean To You?



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America's Last Birthday



"There are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations." – James Madison

Commentary by
Bryan Golden

"All tyranny needs to gain a
foothold is for people of good
conscience to remain silent." –
Thomas Jefferson

Will this be America's last
birthday?
America is the first country
in history to be founded based
on individual liberty. The prin-
ciples of liberty are timeless.
The concepts apply as much
today just as they did over 200
years ago.
Our founders knew firsthand

the misery and suffering caused
by tyranny. They came from
societies where government
controlled its citizens with
an iron fist. They had a solid
understanding of the conse-
quences of unchecked power.
The founders also understood
human nature. Throughout
history, oppression and sub-
jugation had been the norm.
They recognized that power-
hungry people seeking to dom-
inate others would always exist
and be a constant threat to our
free society.
Our Constitution was crafted
specifically to limit the scope
of government to prevent its

infringing on individual liber-
ties. It has numerous checks,
balances, and safeguards
designed to prevent the rise of
tyranny.
But our Constitution is only
a document. Maintaining a
free society requires vigilance
and participation. There will
always be those seeking to sub-
vert the Constitution in order to
seize control.
The power-hungry claim
the Constitution is out of date.
They assert it doesn't apply to
them. They violate your con-
stitutional rights while claiming
to act in your best interest.
An apathetic and gullible

populace facilitates the rise of
tyranny. Tyrants depend on
people's ignorance, inaction,
or apathy in order to confiscate
power.
Tyrants are cunningly decep-
tive. They claim their mission
is so altruistic that it is worth
giving up your liberty on the
pretext of being in your best
interest. Tyrants operate by
suppressing liberty in small
steps under false pretenses.
They target one group at a
time. They depend on those
unaffected remaining silent
because the lost liberty doesn't
affect them.
Continued on Page 5

Fireworks
Advisory

Local Fire and
Law Enforcement
Agencies Attack
Illegal Fireworks

SACRAMENTO REGION,
CA (MPG) – Announcing that
they are once again targeting
individuals who use illegal
fireworks and those responsible
for bringing them into California,
local agencies will, for the
seventeenth year in a row, institute
a "Zero Tolerance" enforcement
procedure.

At a joint news conference
on June 26th, representatives of
the Sacramento Metropolitan
Fire District, Sacramento City
Fire Department, Cosumnes
Fire Department, Folsom Fire
Department, Roseville Fire
Department, and the Wilton Fire
Department - along with repre-
sentatives of the Sacramento City
Police Department, Sacramento
County Sheriff's Department,
Citrus Heights Police Department,
Elk Grove Police Department,
Galt Police Department, the Office
of the State Fire Marshal, CAL
FIRE and other representatives of
the Greater Sacramento Area
Fireworks Safety Task Force -
made the announcement.

In addition, the Task Force
discussed its annual campaign
to enlist the public's help in
protecting their communities from
the threat of illegal fireworks.
The Greater Sacramento
Area Fireworks Safety Task
Force is a safety coalition made
up of representatives of local
government, the fire service,
the 413 non-profit organizations
and charities who sell state-
approved fireworks in the Greater
Sacramento Area, the media,
and the state-approved fireworks
industry.

For more information see
www.ca-fireworks.com.

Source: Revell Communications

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Fair Oaks Man Opens Door for High-End Mobile Games

By David Dickstein,
Special From Intel Free Press

FAIR OAKS, CA- As the con-
tinuing evolution of tablets and
smartphones has made more
immersive mobile games possible,
the once-yawning chasm between
PC and mobile gaming has nar-
rowed. One company with roots in
Fair Oaks is hoping to close that
gap entirely and set the stage for
a future where console, PC and
mobile games all provide gamers
with a triple-A experience.
Leadwerks Software is hoping to
capture part of the growing mobile
gaming market with its recently
launched Leadwerks 3 develop-
ment platform. Competing with
larger players such as Unity and
Havok, the small company hopes
that its C++-based development
engine for building mobile games
for PC/Mac, iOS and Android will
open a door to mobile for many

software developers.
"Most of the professional devel-
opers are stuck in the console
world right now and they don't
really venture out of that," said
Fair Oaks resident Josh Klint,
founder and CEO of Leadwerks.
"What I discovered is in terms of
per unit processing horsepower,
mobile graphics are much more
capable than PC and console
graphics."
During a recent visit to Hacker
Lab in Sacramento, Klint sat
down to discuss the aggressive
development cycle for mobile,
touchscreens on PCs and how soon
console, PC and mobile games
will converge.
What does the future look like
for mobile games on tablets and
smartphones?
There's the world of games that
you play on consoles from tri-
ple-A studios and then there's the
world of mobile, and until now

they have been really separate.
I think the hardware capabili-
ties of mobile are getting to the
point where those two worlds can
merge. Mobile doesn't have to be
off on its own, and it's about to
merge with the conventional game
industry. In the near future, within
2 years, certainly, when the next
"Call of Duty" or whatever comes
out it will be available on the next
Xbox, PlayStation 4, the PC and
whatever iPad and Android tablets
are available at the time. We're not
very far from being able to put tri-
ple-A graphics on mobile.

What is Leadwerks' role in
that mobile gaming future?
We built a game engine on pure
C++, which is what the game
industry uses, and we built it
because we know there will be a
lot of professional studios that will
soon move over to mobile.
Continued on Page 2



Fair Oaks resident Josh Klint, Leadwerks founder and CEO, describes
the company's recently launched Leadwerks 3 game engine as a new
approach to mobile game development. Photo: David Dickstein

Fair Oaks Man Opens Door for High-End Mobile Games

Continued from Page 1

We built the Leadwerks 3 game engine expressly for the purpose of meeting their needs. It will scale extremely well because we built it on pure native code, which is C++. We can enable them to build triple-A games on mobile. Until recently, mobile has been kind of like its own little thing, using it for simple games, but we're getting to the point where you can actually play immersive games with great graphics on mobile. That's what we see happening. That's how we are positioning our company.

Mobile games make use of touch, but do you see touch-screens becoming part of the PC gaming experience?

I think for mobile touch is here to stay. I would like to say the same for PC, but I don't think it's true. The extent that touch makes sense on a PC is a trackpad. I think Windows 8 was a colossal mistake that anybody could have seen a mile away. I'm actually more excited about the future of Linux than I am about Windows. Linux is something that has been in the back of my mind and when you see companies like Valve leading the way with support for Steam on Linux we think there's a big potential there for games

and game development tools. We have started building Leadwerks for Ubuntu. Because Leadwerks is written in pure C++ it's relatively easy for us to get it running on Linux. We think there's a good future there.

What's the biggest difference in developing mobile games for tablets and smartphones compared to developing them for the PC?

Mobile moves fast. The development cycles are faster, the hardware is fast. In the console world we get a new generation about every 7 years. PCs, like, every year and a half, maybe, 2 years. In mobile we get a new generation every 6 months. This means at any given point in time the average wait time for the next generation of mobile hardware is just 90 days. When companies expand into mobile they need to get in fast. What we provide is an accelerated path into mobile so they don't have to deal with all the details that we already figured out. We make it easy for them to transfer all their existing code assets into mobile because everything we do is based on pure C++. All these game studios have legacy code that's all their IP. For example, if they were to go with



"The next step is to push mobile graphics quite a lot further than they've been to-date," said Fair Oaks resident Josh Klint, founder and CEO of Leadwerks. Photo: David Dickstein

Unity or something like that they would have to throw all that code away and transfer all their IP over to C sharp, which really isn't a language commonly used in the game industry.

We pushed high-end graphics on PC as far as we could (with Leadwerks 2) and that had been our specialty. So we took all that knowledge and found out that a lot of that translated over to mobile. In other words, optimization on the big screen translates into

optimization on the small screen. With Leadwerks 2 we were weak on the tools and we knew we had to make a really good editor that was really efficient to use, so that's our foundation that we're building now with Leadwerks 3.

Are you abandoning the PC segment altogether?

On the contrary, I'm looking forward to getting back into high-end graphics on PC, but right now our focus is on professional studios that

want to expand into mobile. You can add good graphics to a game engine that has a good editor, good tools and a good art pipeline, but you can't do the reverse. You can't start with a really advanced renderer and then add tools that make it easier. We had to totally rethink everything and redesign it based on the lessons learned.

Leadwerks 2 did not run on Intel integrated graphics. Leadwerks 3 runs perfectly on Intel integrated graphics. Intel has done a really

good job with their openGL drivers over the recent years. In fact, the first time we ran Leadwerks 3 on Intel integrated graphics it worked perfectly the first time, meaning that they did a good job on the drivers. We shouldn't have to do any testing, theoretically. It should just work. That's not the case with Nvidia or ATI.

The next step is to push mobile graphics quite a lot further than they've been to-date. I'd say we're about one or two iterations of the iPad away from being able to do a full-deferred rendering in a game. I think within 12 months we can be playing something that looks like "Doom 3" on the iPad or the equivalent, like Android tablets.

One thing that Intel is doing in mobile that's pretty interesting is they're coming out with x86-based Android tablets, so they're leveraging the power of Intel integrated graphics with the mobility of Android. I think the power that brings to gaming could really drive some high-powered gaming devices.

Intel Free Press (www.intelfree-press.com) is a tech news site from Intel Corporation, covering news and information focused on people, technology, events and topics relevant to the computing industry.

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By Pastor Ray Dare

There are a lot of faulty misconceptions about prayer; a lot of ignorance about how prayer works and why we pray and when to pray. Some people think prayer is a magic wand. We kind of wave it at something and we get what we want. Some people think prayer is a first aid kit. For them, prayer is an act of desperation. It's like the sign for the fire extinguisher: "Use only in emergency". For some people, prayer is a tug of war where you have to beg and convince God to do something nice for you. The worst misconception about prayer is that prayer is simply a religious duty. The basic motivation behind prayer is guilt. If prayer is a duty for you, you have missed the total point of prayer. There are many purposes of prayer but here are the big three:

Prayer is an act of dedication. It is an opportunity to express our devotion to God and our dependence upon God. It is an act of dedicating ourselves, saying, "God, I need You". The reason a lot of people don't pray is because of the cost. It costs honesty. You

3 Big Purposes of Prayer

have to be honest to God — "I admit I am inadequate. I am helpless. I need Your help in this situation." Prayer is an act of dedication and a declaration of dependence: "God, I admit I have a need. I need Your help in my life."

Prayer is an act of communication. Most of our problems in life are communication problems. You can't understand a person in any relationship unless you communicate with them. You can't understand God, God's will for your life, unless you communicate with Him. We have a hard time believing that God is really interested in us. We can't seem to comprehend that the Creator of the entire universe is interested in car payments, house payments, buying new clothes for the kids for school, the person at work who irritates you, the fact that you have back problems and everything else. When you fully discover how much God really loves you, prayer will no longer be a problem for you. Why? Because we love to talk to the people who love us the most. If you find prayer is a duty, a ritual, a routine that you don't look forward to, it means you don't understand how much God's in love with you and how much He's interested in everything that is of interest to you.

Prayer is an act of supplication. Supplication means a

specific request. The Bible says, "You have not because you ask not." James 4:3 Over twenty times in the New Testament the Bible says, "Ask". Ask, seek, knock, and keep on asking. There's a story of a guy who died and went to Heaven. All over Heaven there were warehouses. Inside there were tremendous gifts, fantastic things, spiritual situations, homes, jobs, happy families, all kinds of neat gifts. The guy said, "Lord, what are all these gifts?" Jesus said, "There is a tag on every one of these gifts. All the tags say the same thing." So he looks at a tag and it reads, "Never asked for." What are you lacking in your life right now, simply because you've failed to ask God for it?

Prayer can change your life. You're invited this Sunday to New Beginnings Church as we begin a new series on prayer. We're going to talk about the secrets to answered prayer, how to pray for miracles, steps to making contact with God, what to do when your answer is delayed, and more.

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Sacramento County DA Reports

Recent cases of interest

CASE: Oscar Gaspar (06/24/13)
PROSECUTOR: Deputy District Attorney Donell Slivka, Homicide Unit
District Attorney Jan Scully announced that Oscar Gaspar was convicted by jury of first degree murder and the personal and intentional discharge of a firearm.
While at the Idle Hour Bar, Gaspar’s girlfriend falsely accused Jesus Garcia as being one of the guys who raped her almost two years prior. Gaspar made contact with a friend who gave him a gun and Gaspar returned to the bar. When the bar started to close, Gaspar went outside before the victim and waited behind a car until the victim walked outside. When the victim walked past him, Gaspar stepped out and fired off six rounds, hitting the victim five times in the back. Four of the five shots inflicted fatal injuries.
Sentencing is set for July 22, 2013 at 4:00 pm in Department 17 before the Honorable Ernest Sawtelle.

CASE: Gurpreet Gosal (06/24/13)
PROSECUTOR: Deputy District Attorney Anthony Ortiz, Homicide Unit
District Attorney Jan Scully announced that Gurpreet Gosal was convicted by jury of second degree murder. The jury also found true enhancements for the use of a gun.
In August 2008, Gosal shot and killed Parmjit Singh during a Sikh sports festival held at the Sikh temple on Bradshaw Road.
Gosal faces a sentence of 35 years to life in prison. Sentencing is set for August 9, 2013 at 9:00 a.m. in Department 10 of the Sacramento Superior Court.

CASE: Steven Hernandez (06/24/13)
PROSECUTOR: Deputy District Attorney Maria Wilson, Felony Trial Teams
District Attorney Jan Scully announced that the Honorable Delbert Oros sentenced Steven Hernandez to 7 years state prison with one year county jail consecutive, for total of 8 years. Last month, Hernandez pled to all charges of two counts of felony hit and run and misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter.
In March 2012, Hernandez swerved onto the shoulder of the road on Winding Way, killing Paul Pellandini and seriously injuring Bill Collins. In a separate case, Hernandez was charged with vehicle theft. He also had two prison priors.
Hernandez received the total maximum sentence.

CASE: Daniel Senna (06/24/13)
PROSECUTOR: Deputy District Attorney Michael Blazina, Real Estate Fraud Unit
District Attorney Jan Scully announced that 59-year-old Daniel Senna of Rancho Cordova was sentenced by the Honorable Steve White to 6 years in state prison for felony grand theft, embezzlement, money laundering, and failure to file state tax returns. Senna was also ordered to pay \$705,870.29 in restitution to the victim, Ms. Gaylen Bills, and \$93,669 in back taxes to the California Franchise Tax Board. Senna had previously accepted a court offer to resolve his case, in which he pled no contest to all charges and enhancements at the start of the third week of his jury trial.
From November 2007 to September 2008, Senna repeatedly induced the 60-year-old victim to loan him money on promises he made that the funds would be used for specific projects related to his bathroom remodeling business “Bathrooms Plus” and other commercial enterprises. On three occasions, the victim refinanced her residence and other properties she owned for a total of \$657,500, then loaned the cash pay-outs from the refinancings to Senna. Senna proceeded to use the bulk of the money for his personal expenses, including repaying previous loans he received from other creditors, purchasing vehicles for his children, and paying for cosmetic surgery for himself. Senna never repaid the victim any of the monies she loaned him. He also failed to file California state income tax returns for the monies he received from the victim. In the course of the trial, the court also heard from an earlier victim of Senna’s who was defrauded in a similar manner by hundreds of thousands of dollars.
This case was investigated and prosecuted by the Sacramento County District Attorney’s Office Real Estate Fraud Unit.

CASE: Shajia Ayobi (06/14/13)
PROSECUTOR: Deputy District Attorney Kevin Greene, Homicide Unit
District Attorney Jan Scully announced today that Shajia Ayobi was sentenced to 26 years to life in prison. On May 1, 2013, a jury convicted Ayobi of first degree murder. The jury also found an arming allegation to be true.
In December 2011, Sacramento police officers responded to a call of a male shot on Interstate 80 at Norwood Avenue. Upon arrival, officers found a male who had been shot in the upper body. He was transported to the hospital where he was declared dead. After further investigation by the Sacramento Police Department, Shajia Ayobi was arrested for the murder of her husband, Ghulam Ayobi.



By County Supervisor Susan Peters

Through the generosity of The American River Messenger this column serves to provide an update periodically about matters affecting the unincorporated community of Fair Oaks.

FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

You can start celebrating Independence Day with a pancake breakfast sponsored by the Kiwanis Club from 7 to 11 a.m. at Carmichael Park, located near Fair Oaks Boulevard and Grant Avenue. Next enjoy the 55th Annual Elks Club Parade on Fair Oaks Boulevard starting at 10:30 a.m. at Marconi Avenue and continuing to Manzanita and Cypress Avenues. The parade features floats, antique automobiles, marching bands, equestrian entries, and much more. Fireworks also will light up the

FAIR OAKS COMMUNITY UPDATE

evening sky over Carmichael’s La Sierra Community Center, 5325 Engle Road. The first rocket is expected to go off at approximately 9:30 p.m.
Visit carmichaelpark.com for more information about all of the day’s activities.

PROTECT YOUR PET FROM FIREWORKS

Remember fireworks can be very stressful for animals possibly causing fear and anxiety. Sadly, the volume of missing pets significantly increases during the Fourth of July holiday.
Leaving a pet outside unattended even in a fenced yard or on a chain can lead to disastrous consequences. With fireworks occurring, in their fear, pets who normally would not leave the yard may escape and become lost, or become entangled in their chain, risking injury or death. Also please make sure your pets are wearing identification tags so if they become lost, they can be returned home promptly.

PARKWAY ALCOHOL BAN

The American River Parkway will have a complete ban on alcohol consumption and

possession both on land and in the water between Hazel and Watt avenues starting on the Fourth of July through July 7 (an exception exists for Ancil Hoffman Golf Course). In past years summer holiday weekends had become major problems along the American River due to excessive alcohol consumption making the parkway less of a family friendly outing because of fights, public nudity, profanity and littering. The Board of Supervisors restored decorum beginning with the 2006 Labor Day weekend and the ban is also applicable for the weekends of Independence Day as well as Memorial Day.

AUGUST FAIR OAKS COMMUNITY COFFEE

My next Fair Oaks Community Coffee Meeting will be on Wednesday, August 21, and the guest speaker will be County Assessor Kathleen Kelleher. Time and location will be posted in my next e-newsletter and on my website.
Susan Peters represents the Third District on the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors. She can be reached at susanpeters@saccounty.net.

2013 “Concert in the Park” Series

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June 27	Vintage Faire..... Rotary Club of Fair Oaks Folk, Ballads, Americana fairoaksrotary@gmail.com	
July 4	Have a Great Fourth of July, there will be no concert tonight as we all celebrate the 4th	
July 11	John Skinner Dance Band..... Swan Family Vision Popular Dance Music.....(916) 966-6080	
July 18	Swing Masters..... Woman’s Thursday Club of Fair Oaks Big Band Swing.....(916) 966-6080	
July 25	Todd Morgan And The Emblems..... Prometric Testing Center	
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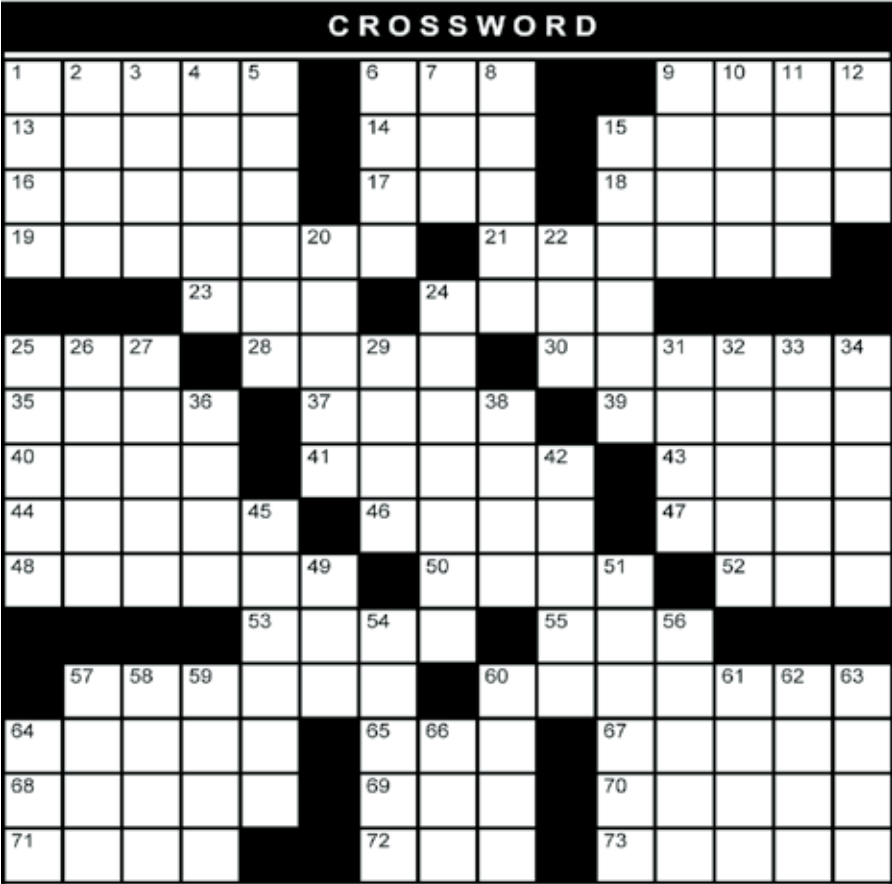
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CLUES

- ACROSS

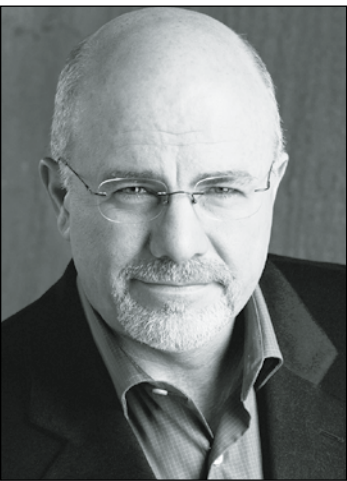
 - 1. Abraham, originally
 - 6. Bag in Paris
 - 9. The complete duration of something
 - 13. Quickly fry
 - 14. Lennon's wife
 - 15. Welsh dog breed
 - 16. "That is," in Latin
 - 17. Like arctic air
 - 18. Run _____ of the law
 - 19. "Like the July 4th holiday
 - 21. "March for the community
 - 23. Be unwell
 - 24. Boot
 - 25. Triple _____
 - 28. Treble _____
 - 30. "Subject of Nathan's contest
 - 35. Turkey dance
 - 37. German composer Carl _____
 - 39. "The whistle or crack of a firework
 - 40. Dwarf buffalo
 - 41. "To prove this, let Facts
- DOWN

 - 1. "Dream on!"
 - 2. Commanded
 - 3. Wished undone
 - 4. "Where French navy helped colonists battle British
 - 5. Kind of unit
 - 6. Sully
 - 7. Mandela's organization
 - 8. Beaver-like South American rodent
 - 9. Family room staple
 - 10. Poking instrument
 - 11. Fit of shivering
 - 12. Not a thing
 - 15. _____ of milk
 - 20. Give permission
 - 22. Campfire leftover
 - 24. Like a dune buggy
 - 25. "Symbolic of states
 - 26. Bert's roommate
 - 27. Take over, in a way
 - 29. Aphrodite's son
 - 31. Three on sloth
 - 32. Excavate
 - 33. Basketry stick
- be submitted to a candid _____

 - 43. Armor chest plate
 - 44. Tear into shreds
 - 46. "What fireworks do before exploding
 - 47. Takes to court
 - 48. Scraps
 - 50. Def Leppard's "Rock of _____
 - 52. Plays for pay
 - 53. Be inclined
 - 55. Hole punching tool
 - 57. Mozambique's neighbor
 - 60. "What we celebrate on the 4th
 - 64. Lace loop
 - 65. Australian runner
 - 67. Mojave plant
 - 68. Friend in a sombrero
 - 69. Mitch's significant other on "Modern Family"
 - 70. Concentration of a solution
 - 71. Do over
 - 72. It's of the beholder?
 - 73. Don't take one's eyes off
34. Canvas prep

 - 36. Like a bow string
 - 38. "Old Glory
 - 42. Disconsolate
 - 45. _____ salad
 - 49. "Ross did this well
 - 51. Gym rat's garb
 - 54. Daughter of a sibling
 - 56. In accordance with law
 - 57. One of no words
 - 58. Battery fluid
 - 59. Apple's apple, e.g.
 - 60. Be furious
 - 61. It's often crunched
 - 62. Done
 - 63. Insignificant
 - 64. Golfer's goal
 - 66. "I wish I _____, I wish I might..."

For Solution
See Page 7



Dave Ramsey is America's most trusted voice on money and business. He's authored four New York Times best-selling books: Financial Peace, More Than Enough, The Total Money Makeover and EntreLeadership. The Dave Ramsey Show is heard by more than 5,000,000 listeners each week on more than 500 radio stations. Follow Dave on Twitter at @DaveRamsey and on the web at daveramsey.com.

No Deal Broken

Dear Dave,
Our son is about to graduate from law school. He took out a loan to cover the cost, but we've been paying on it for two years to help him out. Right now, the balance on the loan is about \$76,000. We could continue paying it off, but my husband is hesitant. How do you feel about this situation?
- Patty

Dear Patty,
It's not a bad thing if you guys decide to continue helping him out by paying off the rest of the loan. But I don't want you to feel as if you're obligated in any way. No deal has been broken here, and you haven't reneged on a previous agreement. But there's absolutely nothing wrong with a young lawyer earning a living and paying off his own debt. He can roll up his sleeves and clean up the mess he participated in making.
If you do decide to pay it off, that's an incredibly generous gift. In my mind, it should be met with much gratitude and appreciation. It should also be accompanied by a signed letter of agreement from him stating that he will never, except in the case of a 15-year, fixed rate mortgage,

Dave Says

borrow money again.
In other words, I'd want to see some kind of permanent commitment and recognition of the fact that you guys have changed your family tree. I'd want this kid to be affected in a deep and profound way by this gift; so much that his kids would also be affected in a positive way by your behavior and by his in the years to come!
- Dave

No Downside...if

Dear Dave,
Is there a downside to refinancing your home often?
- Katrina

Dear Katrina,
There's really no downside to this, as long as each time you do a refinance you lower your interest rate enough to allow you to recoup closing costs before you move. In other words, you have to first make sure the numbers work.
First, calculate the amount of money you'll save as a result of a refinance. The way to do this is by multiplying the interest difference by your loan balance. If you have a \$200,000 mortgage on a 5 percent loan, and you

refinance to a 3 percent loan, that will save you 2 percent per year, or \$4,000. Next, look at the refinance costs. What are the closing costs in order to refinance? If it's \$10,000, and you divide that by \$4,000, that says it would take two and a half years to get your money back. If the costs are \$8,000, it would take you two years to get your money back if you're saving \$4,000 a year. That's pretty substantial!
What I just laid out is called a break-even analysis. Basically, it answers the question of how long it will take you to get back the money you spent on closing costs with the interest you save. That will give you the answer as to whether or not you should refinance again.
So, there's not really a "you've done this too often" rule. If you refinance three times in a year it would only be smart if interest rates have dropped significantly throughout that time. Doing a refinance to save an eighth of a percent won't work out well for you.
- Dave
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	6				4	5	1
	4	1					8
1	2			7	3	4	
			4				

Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

Come back every week for Sudoku!

For Solution
See Page 7.

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By Ronnie McBrayer

My wife attended Lutheran Catechism. My neighbor went to an Adventist Sabbath class. My college friend was enrolled in a Yeshiva. And I attended Sunday School. I suppose these are all different names for a similar religious rite of passage: the formalized instruction of the young. Now, I don’t have very much experience with catechisms and yeshivas, but if college credit could be earned for hours spent in a Baptist Sunday School, I would have had a PhD before turning 10 years of age. In the pre-hyper-technological age of flannel boards, chalk drawings, and colorful construction paper, I learned the stories and doctrines of the Bible (in King James English of course); and I learned to ferociously compete with my classmates. On the wall of my childhood Sunday School class was a giant, grid-line poster board that looked sort of like a giant Excel spreadsheet. There was a place for each child’s name, and then all of these vacant boxes running to the right, eager to be filled with gold stars. Did you bring an offering? Put a gilded check in the box! Are you staying for worship? A trophy is yours. Read your Bible every day this week? Another star blesses you from heaven. I always had a shining wall

Seeing Stars

full of stars, hungry as I was for God’s elusive approval, and I sometimes led the class. Besides, I could not let my twin sister get more celestial rewards than me. Then I would be shamed both at church and at home. And then there was Philip Johns, my most fierce competitor. He was a religious machine. I could only beat him a few months out of each year, and in my daily prayers I had to often repent for wishing he would get struck with the flu, chickenpox, or leprosy – anything – so that he would be sidelined just long enough for me to squeak out the winning margin. Never mind the fact that he was the pastor’s son, something that I felt gave him an unfair advantage. It was that simple and that publicly calculable: Complete a religious assignment and get a star. Those with more stars were more dedicated, more spiritual, more committed, and obviously more beloved by God. Those with fewer stars, well, their faithfulness was suspect at best. When we engrain a competitive spirit into faith – a culture of public shame and reward – is it any wonder we end up with some really faith-damaged adults? Adults that give up on faith all together; adults that hold God responsible for the way religious systems treated them; adults that grow nauseous at even the prospect of darkening the door of a church. There is plenty to compete for and against in this world. There are plenty of winners and losers. But Christianity is not one of those things. Spiritual formation is not a competition. Faith

is not – or at least it should not be – an instrument to humiliate those who just “can’t measure up.” And then there are those of us who “won” the religious game, we who earned our bounteous gold stars with pride. We are no different than those who have given up on faith altogether, for we aren’t living a very spiritual life either. We are committed – let there be no mistake about that – but committed to what, exactly? Obligation? Checklists? To the fawning cheers of the spectators? To seeing our name high and lifted up in heavenly constellations? Our religious efforts and activities to please, praise, or placate God can become the very things that actually distract us from God. For if Christian faith becomes a work-based, blood-sweat-and-tears, incentive-driven, reward-acquisition staircase that compensates the winners and shames the losers, then the focus is placed on us and our rivals, not upon Christ. I’m all for spiritual instruction – a well-ordered method toward Scripture, prayer, and generosity to others. But we would be better served by approaching said disciplines with a non-compete clause squarely in place. The stars shine brighter in the sky than on the Sunday School wall.

Ronnie McBrayer is a syndicated columnist, speaker, and author of multiple books. You can read more and receive regular e-columns in your inbox at www.ronniemcbrayer.net.

America’s Last Birthday

Continued from Page 1

But as liberty incrementally disappears, every group will ultimately be targeted. In short order, freedom is lost by all. Tyrants exert the power of their position to silence opposition. Liberty thrives on the open flow of ideas in a free society. Totalitarian regimes require the suppression of opposing viewpoints. It’s difficult for good and decent people to comprehend the nefarious intent of the power-hungry whose sole objective is the subversion of their liberty. These tyrants lie about their objectives. They publicly proclaim to have only benevolent intentions while working persistently behind the scenes on their malevolent goals. This insidious strategy conceals their real purpose under the guise of fairness, safety, health, and national security. America has more liberty

than anywhere else in the world. However, those who have grown up with abundant liberty often take it for granted. When freedom is all they have known, they don’t truly appreciate its irreplaceable nature. They have so much freedom that they are not alarmed when their freedom is gradually smothered. By the time they realize their freedom has vanished, it’s too late. Once liberty is lost, and those seizing it firmly entrenched, it is extremely difficult to recover. Our freedoms are unalienable rights, not privileges granted by government. Every item in the bill of rights is a precious jewel designed to ensure the immortality of our liberty. Don’t allow anyone to subvert your liberty. Stand up for and speak out in defense of your rights and the rights of others. You must say NO to those who would take your freedom or your neighbor’s freedom. Freedom lost by anyone impacts everyone. When

freedom isn’t insisted on for all, freedom will exist for none. All freedoms are essential, not just the ones you benefit from or believe in. Once one freedom starts to fall, a chain reaction begins that consumes all liberty. Your freedom is hard to get and easy to lose. Although it takes vigilance to protect it, it takes so much more effort to get it back once it’s gone. Only you can ensure that this Independence Day is not America’s last birthday. “There are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.” – James Madison Bryan is the author of “Dare to Live Without Limits.” Contact Bryan at Bryan@columnist.com or visit www.DareToLiveWithoutLimits.com

It Was a Murphy’s Law Kind of Week

By Rev. James L. Snyder, D. Litt

My past week was an open commentary on “Murphy’s Law.” Offhand, I’m not quite sure who come up with this concept, but they must have had a week somewhat like mine was last week. I had to go across town and endure all that traffic. It’s not my favorite place to drive. Just as I turned onto a street, my engine sputtered a little bit. Then, much to my chagrin, the engine stopped completely. I hate when that happens. I turned the key several times and then, I don’t know why I did it, but I glanced at the gas gauge, and the arrow was pointing way beyond the E. It’s bad to run out of gas, but the worst thing for me about running out of gas is calling the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and asking her for help. Thursday also had its issues. My wife wanted me to go to the store and pick up something, and for some reason – I cannot remember it now – I used her car. Maybe it was because I didn’t want to run out of gas!

I got to the store, paid for my purchase, came out and tried finding my truck. I walked up and down and my truck was nowhere in sight. The only thing I could think of at the time was that somebody had stolen my truck. I thought about calling the police, and then I thought better and decided I would call my wife first. “I can’t find my truck,” I said trying to keep my voice as calm as possible not to get her upset. “I think somebody stole it. Should I call the police?” Silence on the phone. Then I heard her say in a very calm voice, “Whoever stole your truck parked it in our driveway.” It was such a horrific week and I was so deep in trouble with my Better Half, I decided to take her out Friday night for a nice meal on the town. I took her to her favorite restaurant. We ordered our supper, then set back and kind of sighed the week away. Maybe all that could go wrong has gone wrong, and the week was about to turn around. We chatted; I tried to skew the conversation away from running out of gas and misplacing my

truck. Then the waitress came with our meal. I was ready to settle down, enjoy a scrumptious meal, and end the week on a happy note. The waitress set my wife’s plate in front of her and she smiled. Then the waitress set my plate in front of me and I freaked out. For some reason, the waitress got my order mixed up with somebody else’s order, and right in the middle of my plate was a pile of broccoli. The only hope I have is that it cannot get any worse than this. I think David, the psalmist, understood this when he wrote, “... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5 KJV). As bad as it gets, as a Christian I have some great things to look forward to in Jesus Christ.

Rev. James L. Snyder is pastor of the Family of God Fellowship, PO Box 831313, Ocala, FL 34483. He lives with his wife, Martha, in Silver Springs Shores. Call him at 1-866-552-2543 or e-mail jamesnsnyder2@att.net. His web site is www.jamesnsnyderministries.com.



By Karen Anderson

Recently I wrote a piece about “procrastinating.” Is this problem ever going to be out of my life? I’m beginning to wonder, even though I know it is not healthy and I don’t like the feeling it gives me. Just a short time ago I can say again.... Oops! I did it again! I just wrote an article about this, but instead of depending on God and His timing, I tried to deal with it alone. Once again, because of – supposedly – concern for the other party, it caused me to get really angry and frustrated to the point I was ready to explode. I wasn’t getting the response I had expected in a timely manner, so once again, I knew I had to deal with it, but I didn’t; I procrastinated. Satan sure likes using this emotion against me on a regular basis. Do you find yourself stuck in a vicious cycle when it seems like you’re coming back to the same problem over and over again? When are we going to

Oops! I Did It Again!

get it through our thick skulls that doing the same thing over and over again is the definition of insanity? Finally, I was complaining to an associate, expecting her to be sympathetic, and she says, “Why don’t you write a brief note asking for the decision?” My response was, “Well, I’m tired tonight so I will write her in the morning, have a friend check my grammar, and then I would pray about it and send it the next day.” I thought she would be in agreement. Instead, she said those words I hate: “STOP PROCRASTINATING!” Just write and send it. I was shocked, but she was absolutely right. What is almost funny about this is that after I wrote and sent it, what a relief. All feelings of anger, frustration, and resentment were gone. It was like a full-ton weight was lifted from my heart. Once again, Satan’s hold was broken on this incident. I’m happy to report that everything worked out. God moved on the decision, and everything worked the way He wanted it. Praise God, but the question in my mind is still: Why did I wait so long? I didn’t need to...God knew what was best, and He handled it. Life would be so much easier if you and I would just turn to God first in every decision we need to make no matter the size.

He has the ability to handle everything. We just need to let Him. His Word says, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” The Armor of God is such a powerful tool against Satan. Pray for that Armor every day. Also make the following declaration coming from His Word: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Then do the following: Hold up your Bible and repeat this confession of faith...” This is my Bible, it is untouchable. It is the indestructible, life source of the Word of God. I know that I am what it says I am. I have what it says I have. I can do what it says I can do. In Jesus’ name... AMEN.” Now, dear ones, be strong and faithful in your battle, and know God is on your side.

PASSAGE: Ephesians 6:10-11 (NIV) James 4:7 (NIV) Karen Anderson is an accomplished speaker, author, and chaplain. Her books are “Nikki’s Tail-Waggin’ Lessons” and “The Little Book of BIG Thoughts Series.” Contact her through her website www.doablesteps.com/contact or follow her on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.



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SHAPING UP !!!
Part II

How many times have you heard these excuses when you thought about weight loss? Perhaps you might have even used a couple of these yourself... like "I don't know how to get started" or I'm too exhausted" or I hurt too much." Well, it's time to get off your duff and do something about it and now. Last time we got through six of Lisa Lynn's exercise busters. Now it's time to get the next four so you can get your routine going. If you remember, Lisa Lynn specializes in metabolic disorders and personal training. She actually was personal trainer for THE Martha Stewart for some thirteen years and she is a regular contributor for the Dr. Oz show. So, let's get to the next four steps to take to get started losing that weight. By the way, Lisa told me this stuff is not negotiable. You've got to be dedicated. Hey, if Martha Stewart found the time to do it, so can we! Here goes:

7) Limit your fat to no more than 20 grams for women and 25 for men if you're serious about losing that excess fat you keep tugging at. Fat will never leave if your feeding it the foods it loves and fat cells love fat and carbohydrates! This includes all fats including the healthy ones. This is where most people get confused, but it's very simple. Your body needs a lot less fat

POPPOFF!

with Mary Jane Popp

than you think or want to admit. Start keeping track of ALL fats and write down the amount you eat daily. Be sure to count all fats including

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Chocolate including dark

Creamers, coconut milks, soy milks (these usually have carbs and sugar too, so they are great for weight gain)

Look everywhere, even the most unsuspecting foods contain more fat than your body can metabolize...especially if you eat out!

8) Don't drink alcohol when you're trying to lose weight. It's a metabolic nightmare. No matter how much you starve yourself or over exercise, it's a fat loss nightmare. You'll feel better and leaner! And no, not even carb free vodka. There is nothing good in alcohol. It's bad for your waistline, and it's a depressant. Need to relax you say? That's what exercise is for. It's THE best anti-depressant on the planet, and it won't make you belly fat!

9) You can't be fit unless you are spiritually fit. Be sure to nourish your spirit daily! You'll

feel totally healthy when your spirit is as fit as your body. Studies show that spiritual people are the happiest people above the fittest athletes! A belief in a power greater is crucial for results, especially if you have been stuck or can't seem to make changes. This is why it's crucial to curb all addictions including over exercising, shopping, or health food addiction. Addictions truly block us from true happiness. Any outside influence to curb inside feeling is an addiction, and that's why drinking is wrong on many levels. Trust me, you'll have more fun living a healthy lifestyle! You won't be sorry!

10) Supplement to end your struggle. Supplements are a huge help (aka miracle in a bottle as seen on Dr. Oz) when used in conjunction with a lean-clean diet and exercise. In fact, supplements can help rid your body of that unwanted fat that's been hanging around your stomach and thighs. I suggest starting with your priorities or your top struggles.

So here's the start with Lisa's Ten Tips to get started losing those extra pounds. She has lots more tips of the trade at her website www.lynnfit.com.

She has been featured on Dr. Oz and numerous TV and Radio Shows across the country. When Lisa talks, the rich and famous listen. But you don't have to be rich and famous to follow her guidelines! It's a combination of body, mind, and soul. How can you miss?!!! In this case, losing is WINNING!!!

Join Mary Jane for the KAH! Noon News Monday-Friday and then again for POPOFF 10 PM – Midnight.

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Red, White and Ooh!

Celebrating the Fourth with Fireworks

By David Dickstein

SACRAMENTO REGION, CA (MPG) – America’s 237th birthday will soon be celebrated with fireworks that shimmer in the sky and gleam from the ground. Where you ooh and aah on the Fourth of July depends on whether you go public to watch an aerial display or private since local laws allow the sale and use of state-approved consumer fireworks in Sacramento County from June 28 through July 4..

That’s good news for local youth groups, service clubs, churches and other cash-strapped area non-profits hoping for booming business from a temporary wooden stand over seven toasty days.

Sunrise Little League, for one, plans to improve its ball field at C-Bar-C Park in Citrus Heights with proceeds raised from its TNT Fireworks stand at 7601 Sunrise Blvd. next to Safe Credit Union. Also in Citrus Heights, a new batting cage and fencing for its backstop are what Mesa Verde High School Softball Boosters is planning to buy with money earned from its TNT stand at 8477 Auburn Blvd. next to California Burgers. Out of its Phantom Fireworks stand next to Pastor Auto Care at 7920 Old Auburn Road, volunteers of American Legion Post #637 will raise funds for a local Boy Scout troop. In the next city over, the Antelope Community Tennis Association will raise funds to resurface courts and keep membership dues low with a Phantom stand next to Rite-Aid at 4300 Elverta Road.

In Carmichael, Glen Oaks Swim Club will help keep kids afloat as members with a Phantom Fireworks location near Quicker Stop Market at 6725 Winding Way. Over in Orangevale, food and other resources for needy local families will spawn from sales at the Assist Local Foundation’s Phantom stand adjacent to Dairy Queen at 9295 Greenback Lane. Meanwhile, Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church, which will run a TNT stand on its own turf at 11427 Fair Oaks Blvd., has earmarked proceeds for its youth, starting with summer camp scholarships. Bella Vista High School Band Boosters will offset competition fees, uniforms, insurance and other costs with funds raised at its TNT stand near the Olive Garden Restaurant at 5445 Sunrise Blvd. in Citrus Heights.

As volunteers for these groups work their mojo to move assortments and individually sold items, customers looking to get the most bang for their buck could become overwhelmed by the wide range of firework prices and performances. To help the patriotic and philanthropic, here’s our annual fireworks guide that includes all 11 of the new state-approved fireworks for 2013 along with the best returning items. Fireworks are listed by price and rated on a 5-star scale for performance, duration, distinctiveness and overall comparative value. Judges included firefighters of Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District, Station 65 in Rancho Cordova, where the test was conducted.

New for 2013

• **Game Time (TNT), \$39.99** – This rookie scores with intense crackle and wide-spreading sparks in the late innings, but the height and overall performance aren’t powerful enough to hit it out of the park. *93 seconds. 3 Stars*



• **Phantom Phlash Phinish (Phantom), \$18.99** – Phantastic Phountain. Second-runner-up for “Best New Fountain” has strong duration, altitude, spread,



Citrus Heights resident Juli Johnson attracts customers to the Active 20-30 Club of Greater Folsom’s Phantom fireworks booth next to Dimple Records in the Sunrise Marketplace. Photo: David Dickstein.

titanium crackle and whistle. *108 seconds. 4 1/2 Stars*



• **Serenity (Phantom), \$15.99** – Noiseless fountain opens with lovely lava lamp-like lumps (thank you, nitrocellulose!) and peacefully pleases with seven colors and white chrysanthemums. *59 seconds. 4 Stars*



• **Phantom Spy-Ro-Mania (Phantom), \$14.99 for two** – A flickering fuse spirals around a tube of crackles and sparks, leading to a whistling tube sidecar that produces four deliciously irritating shrieks. Equivalent of TNT’s lower-priced **Spiral Lite** (\$5.99, 4 Stars) that debuted in 2003 and was, itself, a copycat. *34 seconds. 3 Stars.*



• **Surfs Up (TNT), \$10.99** – “Best New Fountain” runner-up. Gorgeous globes lead to a



wave of multiple effects worthy of exclams of “cowabunga!” Some of the best and widest-spreading titanium rain and crackles for the price. Just about the only thing lacking is an apostrophe in the contractive name. *58 seconds. 4 1/2 Stars*

• **Twilight Magic (Phantom), \$9.99** – Earns “Best New Fountain” honors for three exciting rotations of crackle-and-whistle and wide-spreading sparks at a comparatively super price. *57 seconds. 5 Stars*



• **Eenie, Meenie, Miney, Moe (Phantom), \$9.99 for four** – Sold as a set of four, these cutely named, but lackluster fountains all emit chrysanthemums and crackle, but blink at the onset and you’ll miss the pearl of blue, red, green or yellow that is the distinguishing feature. *42 seconds. 2 Stars*



• **Rainbow Rays (TNT), \$5.99** – Solid value-priced freshman delivers on height and crackle. Duration is one of the longest in the state at this price point. *56 seconds. 4 Stars*



• **Poopy Pooch (Phantom), \$5.99 for two** – It’s all business with this scatological novelty that has an ash-producing snake pellet squeezing out of a cardboard dog’s behind. Been sold by others for years under the name Poopy Puppy, but Phantom is the first to classy up California with this daytime item. They’re sold in pairs, so if the first doesn’t satisfy, there’s always No. 2. Yeah, we went there. *22 seconds. 2 Stars*



• **Cheeky Fountain (TNT), \$3.99** – Colorful sparks, silvery rain and crackling stars gush out of what resembles a fun-labeled kid’s juice box. Price is fair and so is the performance. *37 seconds. 3 Stars*



• **Recess (TNT), \$3** – Two whistles serve as the recess bell, and before playtime is over you’re treated to fleeting, albeit impressive altitude, crackles, chrysanthemums and multiple colors. *24 seconds. 3 1/2 Stars*



Best of the Rest (4-5 Stars)

• **Opening Show (TNT), \$59.99** – Budget permitting, last year’s “Best New Finale” is a 500-gram must-have. The climax at the

2-minute mark is intense. Be no closer than 20 feet away for this one. *130 seconds.*

• **Delirium (TNT), \$49.99** – Fan-shaped 500-gram fountain is pricey, but its intensity and beauty are bona fide stunning. *133 seconds.*

• **Phantom Crown Jewel (Phantom), \$49.99** – Intense 500-gram display of white flowers, colored pearls, gold chrysanthemums and silver crackle. Packs a wallop, though that also reduces burn time. (Note: Prices for many of the items listed here have gone up due mainly to higher costs in China. Still, a \$20 price hike from last year, even though the cost is now on par with other 500-gram items, is a doozy.) *82 seconds.*

• **Peacock Tail Fan Fountain (Phantom), \$34.99** – Last season’s “Best New Fountain” builds excitement with each dazzling stage. Works out to 65 cents per second, but still a must-have. *54 seconds.*

• **Alpha Wolf (Phantom), \$24.99** – Green and purple drop-lets, gold shower and crackling stars finale are awesome. No whistles, doesn’t need them. *83 seconds.*

• **American Spirit (TNT), \$22.99 plus bonus** – This fountain of red, white and bluish stars, gold showers and decent whistles and crackles makes the cut because it comes with the pleasing, 90-second Sizzler Fountain. *80 seconds.*

• **O-Blivion (TNT), \$19.99** – This lord of the ring-shaped fountains emits multi-colored chrysanthemums with pine and impressive titanium crackles. *125 seconds.*

• **Pyropalooza (TNT), \$19.99** – Excellent height, crackle and vivid hues – a vivacious visual. *115 seconds.*

• **Hasta La Vista Baby (Phantom), \$19.99** – Like color and hate whistles? Then this is a solid pick with a screech-free spectrum of fast-changing colors. *125 seconds.*

• **Funky Monkey (Phantom), \$19.99** – This pyrotechnic primate features red pearls and a solid overall performance. *90 seconds.*

• **Mad Dog (TNT), \$17.99 for two (buy one-get one, or BOGO)** – More classic than rabic, this old dog spews amazing crackles, whistles and multi-color sparks. *80 seconds.*

• **Firecracker Fountain (Phantom), \$17.99 for two (BOGO)** – Lives up to its name with a remarkable crackling barrage alongside multi-colored pearls. *76 seconds.*

• **Phantom Night Owl (Phantom), \$14.99** – Phantom’s only internally glowing fountain

(eyes and mouth light up) has four loud screeches and an exciting overall performance. TNT discontinuing the similar-effected LOL Fountain makes this one even more unique. *65 seconds.*

• **Night Treasure (TNT), \$14.99** – Looks like a fan fountain, and it is, albeit only for the final 22 seconds. Still quite impressive. *98 seconds.*

• **King of Bling (Phantom), \$18.99 for two** – The crackles heard during the final third sound just like popping popcorn. Majestic chrysanthemums and whistle. Great value now that it’s now a BOGO. *90 seconds.*

• **Radiant (TNT), \$10** – Named “Best New Fountain” in 2011, this modern classic has a stunning performance for the price. Pushes the legal limit for spreading sparks and the fish effect is awesome. A must-buy. *93 seconds.*

• **Luck of the Irish (TNT), \$9.99** – Still holding its own after a dozen years, this classic features gold and silver spray, red and green balls, crackles and four super-loud whistles. *75 seconds.*

• **Lil Red Devil (TNT), \$9.99 for two (BOGO)** – Packs plenty of heat for the size and price. Ends strong with wide-spreading titanium crackling sparks. *35 seconds.*

• **Phantom Dragon Slayer (Phantom), \$9.99 for two (BOGO)** – Got some white, blue and lemon chrysanthemums, rowdy crackles and red stars going on. *66 seconds.*

• **Little Miss (TNT), \$4.99** – This value-priced opening act packs plenty of color plus silver rain and crackles. *47 seconds.*

• **Moondance (Phantom), \$4.99 for two (BOGO)** – Little dynamo emits loud crackles, purple pearls and glittering gold and white sparks. Note: Equivalent to TNT’s 17-year-old classic **Purple Rain**, \$5.99 for two. *45 seconds.*

Putting on a decent fireworks display these days costs around \$150 plus tax. If you buy that, buy this:

• **From TNT:** Perfect Show assortment (\$99.99), two Lil Red Devils (\$9.99 as a BOGO, lit together), two Radiants (\$20, lit together as your finale), one Surfs Up (\$10.99) and two 3-packs of morning glories (\$8.99 as a BOGO). Use your \$10 off coupon received by joining the TNT Club in advance at www.tntfireworks.com.



• **From Phantom:** Awestruck assortment (\$119.99, includes morning glories and bonus Electrical Shock fountain with coupon available at stand), two King of Blings (\$18.99 as a BOGO, lit together as your finale), one Twilight Magic (\$9.99), one Mystical Magic (free with coupon received by joining the Phantomizer Fireworks Club in advance at www.fireworks.com).



What Does Our Flag Mean To You?

Commentary by
Elise Spleiss

There was a time, not so long ago, when our flag – I believe – did not have as much meaning as it does today. It was just a part of our lives, and we took it for granted. I know I did.

Growing up in the '50s and '60s, I assumed it would always be around, always representing my country, and always respected by our citizens. But unfortunately, this did not happen, and the flag began to be treated badly. Allowed to fly unmanaged, never folded and brought in at night, many became dirty and tattered. Disgruntled groups burned others in protest. Yes, this is legal, but still sad. And our flag began

appearing on inappropriate items. I never realized it, but we are not supposed to “wear” a flag in any form, yet so many different items with this precious image are created to be wrapped around us, and worn on our body and feet. We have rugs we walk on, napkins to wipe our faces, and even cloth bearing this precious image on which we sit.

This misuse remains, but on Sept. 11, 2001, we found ourselves with a renewed respect and appreciation for our flag.

Following a catastrophic attack on our American values and freedom, our pride suddenly – once again – exploded.

We saw our American flag on homes, on posters in businesses of every kind, on numerous pieces of clothing – again, many

inappropriate. I think we just did not know, but maybe for a moment it was all right.

Of course, many of us remember those mammoth flags fluttering from or mounted to the windows of cars and trucks. Today I’m beginning to once more see the fluttering flags attached to the windows of vehicles.

It felt good then, but it’s too bad it had to take a national disaster to bring us a renewed appreciation of our flag.

Remember the photo, taken of three firefighters raising the flag above the rubble of the World Trade Center – Raising the Flag at Ground Zero? It was reminiscent of the famous 1945 WWII photo of six Marines raising Old Glory over Iwo Jima. Thomas E. Franklin, the photographer of the

new photo, said of it, “This was an important shot. It told of more than just death and destruction. It said something to me about the strength of the American people and of these firemen having to battle the unimaginable.”

One of the three firemen in the photo, Dan McWilliams remembered that, as the flag was being raised, other fire personnel yelled, “Good job” and “Way to go!” He said, “Every pair of eyes that saw that flag got a little brighter.” I think this pretty much confirms what our flag means to us.

It has been over 10 years since 9-11, so why is this topic becoming important again? I believe it’s because everywhere we look today in this country, we see on TV, hear on the radio, and read

in print how our borders, our language, our American culture, and our way of life are being compromised in the name of “political correctness.” We are being led to believe that when we’re too proud of our own way of life, of our freedom and uniqueness, we are insulting another’s “way of life.” This is when it gets dangerous.

We still welcome all who desire to come to this country with integrity, as they embrace our culture alongside their own. We welcome them as they learn our language, and come to appreciate and love the American way of life that already exists here as much as we do. We learn from each other.

This is what our flag means to me. What does it mean to you?



“The flag of the United States is one of the most recognizable symbols on earth, more so than our monuments or presidents. From its creation, the flag has stood for freedom, liberty, and the prosperity of the United States. It was designed to accommodate the growth of a budding nation. Stars have been added, but it has retained the same significance. When you take your flag out to fly, hold it carefully, as it is a representation of our whole nation!” – Author Unknown

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An incorrect ad ran in a previous issue. The above ad is the corrected version for 2013.

Homeless in Region Blessed by Union Gospel Mission



Rev. Time Lane (seated) and his staffers Danny Vanek (left) and Eileen Trussell help heal the homeless of the region every day. Photo by Elise Spleiss.

By Elise Spleiss

SACRAMENTO REGION (MPG) It can be a blessing to be homeless in Sacramento. No matter what brings men and women to the Union Gospel Mission near downtown, it is certain they will receive much more than the basic food, shelter and Gospel message they expect. The services men receive will help them greatly improve their daily lives, and if they're ready and willing to work hard, and learn about themselves and their addictions, they can find their lives transformed in ways they never imagined. Services for women are limited at this time, but a variety of daily services are available, and more are being planned for the near future.

The goal of the Union Gospel Mission, whether meeting basic daily needs or providing long-term alcohol and drug rehabilitation

and life skills, has always been "to love the unlovable, care for those the world has written off, and preach the Gospel with truth, love, and kindness, never going beyond what the Bible says." The love and kindness shown by volunteers and staff is seen and felt by their homeless "guests" as they experience the compassion first-hand, and see it put into practice daily throughout the Mission.

Located at 400 Bannon Street, off of Richards Boulevard, one block from the Greyhound Bus station, the Mission is open 365 days a year and has been a staple in the fabric of Sacramento County for over 50 years.

In 1962, eight businessmen – seeing there was a need for a mission outreach to the needy right here at home – were moved to create a place where alcoholic men from Sacramento could go to hear the Gospel and

get a second chance to improve their lives. Originally located on Second Street in what is now Old Sacramento, the campus consists of the main building, a chapel, a Women's Clothes and Accessory Closet, and a warehouse – all sitting on one acre of land.

The Mission provides over 9,600 meals to men, women, and children monthly, including special holiday meals. (In addition to in-house meals, the Food Basket Program provides food boxes twice a week to low-income families going through a crisis situation.)

Clean beds are provided nightly for 60 homeless men and 24 men in the 9-month extensive recovery program. Showers, new toiletry products, and other essential items are also available. Free clean clothes, haircuts, and even a postal mail address helps guests begin to feel like a part of this community

as they begin to regain feelings of dignity and self-worth.

One of the Mission's major life-changing programs is the intensive 9-month in-house drug and alcohol recovery program provided to men who are serious about making a permanent change in their lives and eventually becoming a productive part of society. Participants are provided daily Christian-based classes, vocational training, one-on-one counseling, mentoring, chapel services, medical assistance, and monthly bus passes. They are challenged daily to develop Christ-like behavior in their daily routines.

Six months into recovery, students can enter the "Next Step" phase, preparing to join the workforce. With the help of data specialist Danny Vanek, a graduate of the program, they work on their resume, get business cards, learn to use a computer, attend job fairs, and eventually begin to pound the pavement, looking for what may be their very first "real" job.

Also essential to the daily operation of the Mission are the 40 Christian denomination churches from every corner of the Sacramento region and beyond. Every evening of the year, a different church delivers an uplifting message, leads worship with live music and testimonies, and helps

serve dinner to homeless and low-income residents, including families. Residents in the rehab program attend this chapel service, and participate in their own worship each morning to set the tone for their day.

Women also receive services at the Mission. Bible study is held every Thursday at 9:30 a.m. Homeless women and the working poor – single women and mothers-in the community who are struggling to make ends meet, are provided with a food box to take home. They are then treated to a free shopping spree in the Women's Clothing (and accessory) Closet, enabling them to be well-dressed for job-related events and in other areas of their lives.

Necessary toiletries, hygiene products, and other essential items are also available. They can also receive items for their children. Services for women are limited at present. A new, much larger warehouse is scheduled to open in the near future, which will house the Women's Clothes Closet and other expanded services for women. Homeless women are presently referred to shelters such as Maryhouse-Loaves and Fishes.

Annual programs include a Homeless Birthday Party in the summer for participants, many who have never had a birthday

party. Activities are held for every holiday and other special days on the calendar, such as a Valentine's Dinner Banquet and handing out phone cards on Mother's and Father's Day. Hundreds of food boxes are given away during the months of Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. A warming center is available, with hot coffee and pastries during cold weather.

As a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, the Mission operates as a voluntary Christian organization. There will never be a charge for any service or goods provided to any recipient at the Mission. With a growing database of over 45 thousand donors, the Mission operates totally without tax or government support of any kind, and is funded entirely by the generous donations of these individuals, churches, and other organizations in the community. All financial information – including tax return forms – is available at the Mission website.

After 50 years of serving the needs of homeless and the working poor, the Union Gospel Mission runs like a finely-tuned machine, smoothly integrating the needs of daily homeless with on-site program participants, and women and families who seek rest and help throughout the year. A testament to the success of their services is that of 25 permanent paid staff at the Mission, 15 are graduates of the men's rehab program – some having been with the Mission for over 20 years.

For more information on the Mission's programs and to hear an uplifting message of hope, join Executive Director Rev. Tim Lane on the radio at KFIA, 710 AM, Sundays and Mondays at 3:00 p.m.

Needs at the Mission are always great. A wish list of daily and seasonable supplies can be found at www.ugmsac.com, and www.facebook.com/ugmsac. For volunteer and donation drop-off information, call (916) 447-3268.



Women's Clothes Closet fills a vital role. Photo by Elise Spleiss.

Cinder-Ella

A one-hour children's show even grownups will enjoy!

All of your favorite characters are here in John Lee's wacky, hilarious rendition of the classic tale, including Elly, a wise cinder-covered girl, two ridiculous stepsisters (Marmaduke and Falafel), and handsome Prince Johann. But in this telling, we also meet Tok Tok, Elly's irrepressible mouse-friend, the gentle elder, Faithful John and a fairy godmother unlike any you have ever seen named Dame Peridot, Queen of Faerie Earth Magick. Colorful costumes, larger than life characters, and more than a few surprises will keep the whole family laughing in this delightful children's show!

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